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ABSTRACT

Evaluation for any internship experience, whether in the form of a complete internship "audit" or an appraisal of individual components of the experience, is a three-stage task for the academic supervisor: (1) finding out what happened and comparing actual results with predetermined goals; (2) finding out what specific factors in the internship accounted for the results; and (3) using the information gained in planning the next internship experience by improving on unsatisfactory performance and capitalizing on successes. The student, academic supervisor, and on-the-job supervisor should all have input in the evaluation process, which has the central aim of improving the content and overall quality of the learning experience. Evaluation criteria should be precise and clearly communicated as program objectives. Although evaluation is arduous, time-consuming, and sometimes frustrating, it is the only sound diagnostic tool for monitoring the academic soundness of internship experiences within multinational and foreign business programs. (MSE)

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"The Evaluation of Internship Experiences Within Multinational Business and Foreign Language Programs: Methodology and Instrumentation"

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THE EVALUATION OF INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES WITHIN MULTINATIONAL BUSINESS AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS: METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTATION

Barney T. Raffield, III, Ph.D.

Internship experiences are becoming an increasingly more critical component of academically sound multinational business and foreign language programs. Faculty in such programs are generally highly competent classroom teachers but lack the skills and training necessary for effective internship evaluation. The purpose of this paper is to provide practical guidelines by which multinational business and foreign language internships can be evaluated.

The paper focuses specifically on the following topics: fundamental principles for the evaluation of internship experiences, how to begin to measure intern effectiveness, how the internship supervisor should initiate the evaluation program, and how to select criteria for the measurement of intern effectiveness. Each of these areas is treated in detail in order to provide a well-balanced, skills-building approach to multinational business and foreign language internship evaluation.

Fundamental Principles for the Evaluation of Internship Experiences

As soon as posible after an intern begins his/her internship experience, the internship supervisor should carefully monitor the intern's progress on a continuing basis. Without such evaluation, the supervisor cannot ascertain whether or not the internship is truly providing a learning experience for the student, according to the original plan of what the internship was to achieve (see Raffield, 1985); or whether it is merely providing the host organization with a relatively inexpensive, or perhaps even gratis, form of semi-professional assistance.

Planning and evaluation, then, are interrelated activities. Evaluation logically follows planning, the implementation of the plan, and the supervision of the implementation. Planning indicates what is to be accomplished, implementation sets the plan into motion, supervision places a control on the implementation of the plan, and evaluation compares the results of the plan with its original goals. Once the evaluation has been completed and discussed fully between the supervisor and the intern, with input from both parties, any necessary corrections or adjustments can be made in the original learning goals of the internship as well as in the strategies and techniques employed in the implementation of the internship, and the quality and style of supervision utilized to monitor the day-to-day activities involved in the internship. In this way, the managerial functions of planning, implementing, supervising, and evaluating, are linked in a circular relationship. Although the planning function initiates the internship experience, the evaluation of the internship generally recycles an even better planned internship, rather than serving as an ending to the original experience.

How to Begin to Measure Intern Effectiveness

An "internship audit," adapted from the concept of a "marketing audit,"is the essential element of a total evaluation program. An audit implies a review and an evaluation of some activity. The "internship audit" is a systematic, comprehensive, periodic review and evaluation of the entire internship experience--its goals, strategies, tactics, performance, and supervision (Schuchman, 1959; Oxenfeldt, 1959).

A complete audit is obviously an extensive and arduous project, but the rewards from an "internship audit," can be great indeed. Internship supervisors can identify an intern's problems; aand by reviewing the strategies and tactics used in implementing the learning goals of the internship, the supervisor can keep abreast of both the type and quality of learning which the internship is providing to the intern. Intern achievements can also be analyzed, so that successful strategies and tactics and appropriate learning goals can be identified for future use. On the other hand, an "internship audit" can spot lack of coordination in the internship program, outdated strategies and tactics, or unrealistic learning goals. The audit allows the internship supervisor to place responsibility correctly for good or poor performance. Furthermore, an audit should anticipate future situations which are likely to occur and provide strategic ideas as to how these situations should be handled by both the intern and the supervisor. It is intended for "prognosis" as well as "diagnosis." It is the practice of preventive as well as curative internship medicine (Schuchman, 1959).

Before a program for measuring and improving intern effectiveness can get underway, there must be a general agreement among all parties directly involved in the internship experience that the foremost function of internship evaluation is the improvement of the content and overall quality of the learning which takes place. This major function clearly necessitates certain subsidiary functions (Barr, Burton, and Brueckner, 1938).

1. One cannot evaluate except in terms of an accepted philosophy, an accepted and understood statement of aims among all parties involved in the internship experience. The cooperative formulation of this

statement is a function of internship evaluation. Common purposes, goals, and standards are thus established.

2. A process has to be developed for carrying on an evaluation program which is aimed at the accurate measurement of the intern's mastery of pre-planned learning objectives.
3. All personnel directly involved in the internship experience (the student intern, the supervising faculty member and the internship supervisor) must be brought together to enable a thorough and meaningful evaluation of the total learning process. The evaluation process should be of such nature as to protect and stimulate the individuality and creativity of all persons included. Human relations are far more important than the mechanical efficiency of any process.
4. A theory and practice of evaluation must be developed which are consistent with the accepted goals and philosophy of the internship experience.

How the Faculty Supervisor Should Initiate the Evaluation Program

The faculty supervisor should be able to identify good and poor interns and internship experiences, and also be able to assist interns in making their own evaluation of their internship program. He/She should be able to make positive recommendations for improvement, or to enlist the aid of those who can be of help. Through observation and participation, the supervising faculty member should keep in close touch with internship activities in an effort to provide the best possible assistance to each intern.

There are various types of intern appraisal forms. Some of these forms are based on the supervising faculty's expectations which list, for the most part, desirable qualities for an intern to possess and to demonstrate during the course of the internship. Rating scales, observation forms, predictive appraisals of intern-training programs, studies of intern opinions, and other diagnostic tests can be utilized. All of these devices provide "subjective measurement" of no more than a sample portion of total performance.

An evaluation procedure should be used "with" interns, rather than "on" interns. Evaluation should be viewed as a cooperative attempt to solve a professional problem. Discussion of the items on the evaluation forms to be used, with both the intern and the internship supervisor, should take place prior to the beginning of the internship in an effort to stimulate the achievement of the learning goals planned for a particular internship experience. An evaluative scale could be used very effectively by interns for self-evaluation and for subsequent conferences with the supervising faculty member. Interns should be encouraged to employ whatever self-appraisal techniques are suitable.

If interns feel that the results of the evaluation will be used against them, they will typically be unwilling to reveal weaknesses and problems which they encounter during the course of the internship. However, they will generally be eager to participate in evaluations which tend to strengthen their own self-esteem and professional development.

One of the first steps in intern appraisal is for all of the parties directly involved in the internship to discuss and to agree jointly on the criteria to be used in intern evaluations. In fact, cooperative planning and

joint effort hold the key to any successful evaluation program. Evaluation should always be purposeful. Too often it is considered as an end in itself. True evaluation is for improvement and growth through the analysis of the intern's strengths and weaknesses; and, thus, should be the basis for guidance and constructive criticism.

For a successful evaluation program, the faculty supervisor, in concert with the on-the-job internship supervisor, must accept the responsibility for acquainting the intern with what is expected of him/her, and what appraisal techniques will be utilized. Interns must think in terms of the constructive concept of evaluation and consider it as a source of help. Both the faculty supervisor and the on-the-job supervisor must avoid giving the impression that the evaluation is the final verdict on the intern's work and worth.

Intern evaluation should be continuous rather than periodic. It should be accompanied by, and followed with, helpful supervision. No matter how many secondary reasons there may be to do intern evaluations, the most primary purpose is to improve the content and quality of the intern's learning experience.

How to Select Criteria for Measuring Intern Effectiveness

Selecting criteria for the measurement of intern effectiveness is probably the most difficult and most important task in the development of the appraisal program. A well-rounded program might include such items as intern behavior and relationships with others involved in the internship experience, intern growth, intern-supervisor (faculty supervisor and on-the job supervisor)

relationships, and strategic and tactical techniques for meeting the learning goals of the internship.

According to Mager (1962), the intern and the internship experience should be evaluated in terms of evidence that the intern has concerning the extent to which the learning objectives established jointly by all the parties involved in the preparation of the learning agreement (see Raffield, 1985) have been realized. Important guidelines in this procedure involve the following:

1. Identify the learning outcomes that the evaluator is seeking by name; he/she should specify the type of knowledge that will be accepted as evidence that the intern has achieved the learning objectives set forth for the internship.
2. Attempt to define the desired learning outcomes more precisely by describing the important conditions under which the acquired knowledge will be demonstrated.
3. Specify the criteria of acceptable performance by describing how well the intern must perform to be considered as having mastered the task at hand, and as having succeeded in reaching the desired learning objective.

Criteria for evaluation, then, must clearly communicate and be related to intended educational outcomes; and as the statements are written, they must describe all intended results. Statements as to evaluative criteria are useful only to the extent that they specify what the intern must be able "to do" or "perform" when demonstrating his/her mastery of the learning objectives of the internship.

"Appraisal of learning outcomes," then, is perhaps a more accurate description of how the evaluating supervisor should operate than is "appraisal of intern effectiveness." Appraisal is not limited to the application of a single test of value to one, simple predetermined criterion. It is a comprehensive process. Characteristics of appraisal are as follows:

1. It is an integral, complex part of education.
2. Intern and internship effectiveness are determined best by appraisal of intern growth as related to the desired learning goals in individual situations.
3. The total intern personality and all aspects of individual development and demonstration of acquired skills are evaluated.
4. Many tools and procedures, and many types of evidence are utilized in the evaluative process.
5. Evaluation means not only appraising, judging, and diagnosing; but it also means determination as to whether the results are adequate and desirable.
6. The evaluation process is not completed by the intern or the faculty supervisor alone; cooperative efforts by all directly involved participants are indicated.

Conclusion

Clearly, the evaluation process for any internship experience--whether in the form of a complete "internship audit," or only an appraisal of individual components of a particular internship experience--is essentially a three-stage task. In the evaluative process, a supervisor's job is as follows:

1. Find out "what" happened--get the facts; compare actual results with predetermined goals to determine where, if at all, they differ.
2. Find out "why" it happened--determine what specific factorsin the internship experience accounted for the results.
3. Decide "what to do" about it--plan for the next such type internship experience so as to improve on unsatisfactory performance and to capitalize on things that were done well.

Although evaluation is an arduous and time-consuming process, often fraught with feelings of frustration on the part of the internship evaluators and feelings of anxiety on the part of the intern, it is the only strong benchmark and diagnostic tool that seems able to monitor the current academic soundness of internship experiences within multinational business and foreign language programs. Doubtlessly, the content, substance, style, and quality of the evaluative process for internship experiences will improve and become more refined as colleges and universities, in cooperation with companies both in the United States and abroad, create such curricular opportunities for students interested in multinational business careers which are increasingly requiring fluent foreign language speaking and writing abilities.

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